

Distinguished members of the Health Appropriations Subcommittee:

My name is Ruth Lerro; I live in Kensington, CT and am here as a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence and in particular here to support the \$2.5 million included in the Governor's budget on Line T1449 for the Department of Public Health to fund gun violence intervention grants in FY2024, and the \$400,000 on Line 274 each year for operational expenses.

This however is not nearly enough funding. We need \$10 million to start addressing the rampant gun violence epidemic in our state especially in our urban communities. CT will have a surplus of \$3 trillion this year and so \$10 million is not a lot of money to spend on gun violence prevention especially since the annual cost of gun violence in CT is estimated to be somewhere between \$60 to \$90 million with a societal cost of \$1 billion if you factor in the lifelong consequences from victims of shootings such as, mental illness, chronic health problems and criminal behavior. To reiterate, gun violence prevention programs can be seen as very cost effective measures since the up front spending of \$10 million could save the state anywhere from \$60 million to up to \$1 billion. Funding gun violence prevention is a financially sound and morally just issue which will not only save the lives of our citizens but also save the state money.

I am not a victim of gun violence nor do I live in an area where it affects the daily lives of people in my community. This issue is of great concern to me however because there are an alarming number of guns in this country, too many of which are having a devastating impact on every aspect of our American lives such as shootings at work, shootings in grocery stores, shootings in night clubs, shootings in churches and of course right here in CT we have had the horrible tragedy in Sandy Hook, twenty children dead along with 6 of their teachers. This is a public health crisis which cannot be solved with more policing. What is needed is funding for evidence based prevention and intervention programs that stop the gun violence before it happens. At this moment, the greatest need is in Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven where there has been an incomprehensible amount of death trauma and community instability due to gun violence. This cannot be put aside for another time. We need to act now to direct resources to urban areas where they are most needed and prevent needless killings.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

Sincerely,
Ruth C. Lerro